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AUTHOR Grubb, W. Norton; Badway, Norena; Bell, Denise; Castellano, Marisa

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the impact of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 on the work training being provided to welfare recipients by community colleges. This bill changed the approach for addressing poverty from a human capital perspective, which emphasizes the need for training and education to achieve self-sufficiency, to a "work first" conception, which stresses immediate employment as the path to self-sufficiency. The authors conducted interviews with state officials administering community colleges who were involved with welfare reform; observed exemplary local programs over a period of 2 years to see what effective efforts looked like; and drew on a survey of ten states in the process of reforming their workforce development systems. Among their findings were the following: (1) the role for community colleges in welfare reform varies dramatically by state, with some having no role at all, and colleges in other states providing training programs that can last as long as 5 years; (2) program development is being coordinated at the local, rather than at the state, level; and (3) several new models of practice are emerging, including short-term job training, flexible delivery options, customized programs, and opting out. A discussion of emerging problems and future directions is also included. (Contains 24 references.) (CAK)

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Norton W. Grubb
Norena Badway
Denise Bell
Marisa Castellano

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND WELFARE REFORM:

EMERGING PRACTICES, ENDURING PROBLEMS

W. Norton Grubb*, Norena Badway, Denise Bell, Marisa Castellano
School of Education
University of California, Berkeley

Welfare reform — the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, or PRWORA — promised to "end welfare as we know it". It culminated over three decades of pressure to replace welfare, in the form of cash grants, with employment. But in its emphasis on work, it has also brought the decline (if not the demise) of human capital solutions to poverty, in which education and training are necessary prerequisites for self-sufficiency. They are being displaced by "work first" conceptions in which immediate employment is the goal and the path to independence. Or, more precisely, the Act has replaced a *naive* version of human capital, which has justified a great deal of ineffective education and training for welfare recipients and the working poor, with an equally naive version of "work first", offering an untested and unexamined faith in employment of any kind as a stimulus to self-sufficiency.

"Work first" is an obvious challenge to traditional providers of education and training, and it's unclear what role they can play in welfare reform. We are principally concerned in this paper with the emerging roles of community colleges, which have been active not only in postsecondary occupational education but also in remedial (or developmental) education, in prior welfare-to-work programs and in various other workforce development efforts. Community colleges have some

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potential advantages over other, more fragmented and limited-purpose providers. As comprehensive institutions, they can link individuals in welfare programs with mainstream education opportunities. Under some conditions they provide more effective remedial (or developmental) education than other programs. And they have a tradition of concern with instruction and pedagogy that is lacking in job training and adult education programs.

But community colleges have also been roundly criticized for their rigidity, for elitism in focusing largely on transfer to four-year colleges (at least in some colleges), and for neglecting support services including placement efforts. In some states the gulf between "education" on the one hand and "training" on the other remains broad and unbridgeable. Given an institution with the potential for such effectiveness, an important question is what community colleges are doing under welfare reform, and whether the challenges of "work first" have caused innovative and effective approaches to develop. Of course, presidents of community colleges and other advocates are concerned about declining enrollments under "work first", though that will not be our principal concern.

It's still quite early in the development of welfare reform. The most common reaction of state and local officials is that "it's too early to tell" what's going on. Developments are fast and furious, and plans unveiled one month may be upended the next. This fluid situation is almost impossible for researchers to describe — but it's equally impossible for policy-makers in state capitols, or administrators in Washington, or program planners at the local level to understand since each group has a incomplete view of the varied developments. And so we've opted to provide an initial overview of developments within community colleges, as far as we can divine it from limited intelligence, knowing that the details are changing even as we write but hoping that the broad outlines we describe are correct — or that they provide hypotheses that need to be further examined as developments unfold. For

these purposes, we have relied on interviews in 20 states, with state officials administering community colleges and involved with welfare reform and with state and local administrators to whom they referred us.[1] We have also been observing "exemplary" local programs — programs nominated by other state and local officials — over the last two years in an effort to see what effective efforts might look like. And we also draw on a previous study of ten states in the process of reforming their entire workforce development "systems" (Grubb et al., 1999), since the effects of welfare reform are generally consistent with these larger developments.

Before describing our findings, we should clarify that welfare reform is a hideously complex event. The PRWORA itself is an odd mixture of flexibility and directiveness. The Act has given states greater leeway in some dimensions — particularly, for our purposes, in deciding how to structure welfare-to-work programs — since they can use funds in any "manner reasonably calculated to accomplish the purpose of the TANF". However, there are stringent limitations on how long individuals can be on welfare (five years), a requirement that all adult participate in work activities (including some forms of education and training) within two years, a limitation on how long they can be in "vocational educational training" of 12 months for up to 20 percent of recipients,[2] and requirements that 25 percent of welfare recipients be in work activities the first year (1997), 30 percent the second year (1998), and so on.

The booming economy of the mid-1990s is another actor, since it created conditions in many communities where virtually any able-bodied individual could find work — usually minimum-wage, low-skilled work without prospects for advancement, but work nonetheless. So the welfare rolls have fallen dramatically — caseloads declined by 30 percent between January 1993 and September 1997, and have continued to decline at faster rates than anticipated[3] — and most states have

found it easy to meet their welfare reduction targets. Indeed, in a few states there are complaints about the lack of enrollment in welfare-related programs, since the most able individuals are already working.

With the strong economy, states have enjoyed a "welfare windfall" from their federal welfare grants, which are block grants determined by spending levels during fiscal years 1992 to 1995 rather than by the diminished welfare rolls of 1997 and 1998; states can spend these funds in various ways, and some have claimed to use them for increased education and training — though in other cases states are failing to use all their federal funds.[4]. In addition, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 provided an additional $3 billion for the Department of Labor to allocate to states and localities for welfare to-work (WtW) programs for in fiscal years 1997 and 1998. Thus welfare reform encompasses a welter of conflicting regulations and funding, including additional funding for welfare-to-work efforts, lower unemployment rates facilitating the movement into employment, strict requirements on the activities of welfare recipients, and restrictions on education and training.

Under these confusing conditions, the truth is elusive. But some patterns are emerging — and they are quite consistent with problems that have plagued welfare throughout its history.

I. The Emerging Variation Among States

Community colleges are quite different from state to state, but their roles in welfare reform are even more varied. In some states there are simply no roles for community colleges, or any other training providers. In Missouri, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Michigan, and Massachusetts, for example, state policy does not provide any training provided for TANF recipients, and therefore there is little for community colleges to do unless they can provide services at the local level. The

bias of "work first" against education and training has been exacerbated in some cases by the lack of any effective state system of community colleges or strong state office. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, for example, there is no state office that can represent community colleges in state planning, and so colleges have no role at the table and no voice in deciding what programs might be effective.

In other states a sequence of required activities reduces the amount of education and training provided to welfare recipients. In Connecticut, welfare clients receive training only after completing five prior steps, guaranteeing that the numbers in training are small and — a point we return to in Section IV — also guaranteeing that the individuals who are eligible to participate in education and training are the least employable. (Connecticut also abolished a program operated by community colleges called Job Connections with both school and work-based components, though local colleges are now trying to resurrect their own versions of this.) Georgia also specifies a sequence of activities, with some clients going directly to work while a few others get training before employment; community colleges are therefore creating programs specifically for welfare recipients called New Connections to Work, typically lasting 10 to 20 weeks and providing more support services than for regular students.

A third group of states specify a role for community colleges to play. While Wisconsin is usually considered a gung-ho "work first" state, they have developed a program called "Step Up" that envisions "employment ladders" leading from W-2 (welfare to-work) transitions allowing 12 hours per week of training, to community services jobs with 10 hours per week of training and 30 hours of work experience, to trial jobs with subsidized placements, to unsubsidized employment at the top of the ladder. A variety of individuals (not just welfare recipients) can receive short-term skill training to advance them up this "ladder" of employment opportunities; individuals can "step out and step back in", leaving training for employment but

"stepping back in" as the conditions of their jobs require.[5] Funds are allocated to local colleges through local Workforce Development Councils. This program has a remarkably cogent position on the battle between "work first" and human capital approaches:[6]

> Allowing that education is not the answer, it also may be said that workforce attachment alone is not the answer either. If current participants don't work toward the basic skills necessary for retention and advancement, their chances for long-term workforce attachment may not be as good. Combining work with education and training is the approach that will most likely yield the type of long-term results that we're looking for.

While it isn't clear how extensive Step Up now is, it provides a clear state vision of a progression of education and training.

Also within this third group, Iowa has developed a Family Investment Plan that identifies the skills necessary for individuals to progress. The state allows 24 months of education and training within a 36 month period, more than the average state. Programs are developed locally, with DOL funds going to Regional Advisory Boards; while no college applied for these funds, some are integrating welfare clients into regular programs. Oregon has integrated welfare planning into regional planning agencies that include community college, welfare programs, and job training. Consistent with a substantial history of innovation, the state is developing a blizzard of changes including replacing a linear delivery of services by a "messy" system in which job experience, classroom education, and support are mixed together[7]; in which core services are being defined covering job training, support services, and work experience; and in which short-term training is based on the specific needs of individuals, often customized to particular employers. As in most other states, the development of these programs is being left to local Workforce Development Boards, but the state provides technical assistance and models of

various practices (including pedagogies like applied learning, functional literacy, and the like).

New York provides local decisions over education and training as long as these activities last 12 months or less, and community colleges are the primary deliverers. They have been developing short, non-credit programs in addition to Bridge programs that provide 12 months of work-based training before employment. New York has also developed a comprehensive technical assistance manual for local colleges, following a pattern we have labeled "state guidance, local direction" where a state provides funding and a vision for local programs to carry out.[8] Finally, Washington has been active both in promoting education and training for welfare clients, and in using its community colleges. It has received a waiver from the federal government in order to provide a maximum of five years of education and training, rather than two. The state emphasizes the use of industry-related skill standards to influence the content of education and training programs. The Bridge programs now being planned are short programs leading to certificates but that can "transition into a degree program at a later date", bridging the gap between short-term training and regular education. Most impressive of all, the state has articulated a system of wage and skill progression designed to allow low-income workers to get better than minimum wage jobs initially and then continue to obtain the skills necessary for advancement. This begins before employment with assessment and the development of a career passport specifying both a job ladder (with jobs of increasing earnings) and the skills necessary to move up that ladder; technical skills, basic skills, and on-the job experiences are used as necessary, and all short-term programs lead to associate degrees so that individuals can continue in the education system.

Of course, there are various amalgamations. North Carolina is a "work first" state, and therefore there's little education and training specifically for welfare

recipients. However, community colleges have been the designated providers of state-funded training for many years. The Human Resources Development (HRD) curriculum, the traditional means by which welfare recipients were trained in basic work skills and basic education, continues to be used for welfare recipients; colleges are expanding their non-credit offerings, and sometimes incorporate welfare recipients into customized training for firms. What little education and training is provided for welfare recipients therefore takes place in community colleges.

For the states that have been most active in promoting education and training for welfare recipients — particularly Iowa, Oregon, Washington, and perhaps North Carolina with its HRD program — history matters. These are states with extensive histories of using communities colleges in their state economic and workforce development policies; systems of community colleges are relatively strong; and these states have been active in reforming their state workforce development systems in the interests of greater coherence and effectiveness (Grubb et al., 1999). In contrast, the states with little role for education, training, and community colleges in their welfare efforts are those that have paid little attention to their education and training systems, that have relatively weak community colleges, or that are single-minded in their devotion to "work first" over any kind of training. In these states, there is no simple way for community colleges to participate actively in welfare developments, since the roots of such participation have never been developed.

The variation among states extends to funding as well. Among the states we examined, only California and Illinois have provided their own general fund revenues to community colleges. A few claim to have used their "welfare windfall" to support pilot programs or other education and training, though it would take careful accounting to determine if this is true. The majority have been content to let

federal WtW funds flow to local PICs or local Workforce Development Boards without any state supplement.

Now, the variation among states in current policies portends great differences over the next several years. In the absence of substantial federal intervention, or of some unimaginable burst of energy among the states with almost no education and training (like Missouri, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Michigan, and Massachusetts), we suspect that vast differences will open up. A few states will provide imaginative approaches to education and training; a larger number of states will develop quite ineffective, short-term programs (as described in the next section); and a large number of states will offer virtually nothing but unsubsidized employment with little but job search assistance to help welfare recipients into the labor force. This kind of variation among state is nothing new to welfare, of course: the differences among states in eligibility requirements, benefit levels, work provisions. and support services have always been substantial — and a source of anguish to advocates for the poor. But it's disheartening to see these inequities being replicated in education and training efforts for welfare recipients, when our state and federal policies for individuals *not* on welfare continue to be driven by human capital ideals.

II. The Trend toward Localism

In the developments so far, the overwhelming emphasis has been on the *local* development of any education and training being provided to welfare recipients at the local level. The states that have no real policies about education and training, or no state policies related to community colleges, have simply left local colleges to develop what they can. But even those states with clear policies about education and training, and those which treat community colleges as preferred

providers, have left the development of programs to local colleges. For example, Texas has developed state guidelines for workforce programs, but allows decisions to be local — the state just "gets out of the way". New York has provided technical assistance and a particular model (the Bridge program) that incorporates performance-based funding, but again emphasizes local development. Ohio has shifted all decisions to the county level; Oklahoma relies on local decisions as part of its overall process of voluntary cooperative at both the state and local levels through Workforce Development Compacts. Many states rely on local boards of one kind or another; for example, Wisconsin with its vision of Step Up programs allocates funds to local Workforce Development Councils before community colleges can receive any of the funds. Florida has been as active as any state in formulating a variety of market- and performance-oriented measures for its workforce development program, including performance-based funding; but it views these policies as enabling local programs to develop their own programs, in competition with one another. Oregon too has been an active state, but it stresses regional planning through regional Workforce Development Boards with state policy providing vision, technical assistance, and a moral suasion rather than coercion. Every state, therefore, is relying on colleges to develop their own initiatives locally, rather than developing state programs that are then required at the local level. Furthermore, while a few states are providing visions or models along with technical assistance — Oregon, Washington, North Carolina with its HRD curriculum, Wisconsin with Step Up, Iowa with its Family Investment Plan — most are giving local education and training programs relatively little help in thinking about how to respond to welfare recipients.

The reliance on local initiative derives from several different sources. In workforce development generally, most states have taken the approach of "state guidance with local direction", rather than more directive approaches (Grubb et al.,

1999, Section III). Community colleges specifically are local institutions, responsive to local labor markets and constituencies, and state offices for community colleges are with only a few exceptions rather limited in their powers (McDonnell and Zellman, 1993; Grubb, 1996b, Ch. 7). Of the WtW grants, 75 percent are allocated to JTPA Service Delivery Areas, and administered either by PICs or local Workforce Development Boards; the remaining 25 percent support competitive grants to PICs or other local groups. Thus this large amount of federal funding bypasses any state initiative or control. It isn't surprising, then, to find a local emphasis in the current efforts to establish welfare-to-work programs. Among other things, this means that community colleges wanting to participate in welfare reform must do so through local initiatives and partnerships, not usually by state policy.

One obvious consequence of localism is that the variation in offerings are even greater: not only is there substantial variation among states in the education and training programs provided, but there is also be enormous variation within states. Some colleges — the entrepreneurial ones we mention in the next section — are starting to develop innovative and flexible programs, with several characteristics that are likely to make them effective. Others are taking advantage of requests at the local level to provide short-term training and other specific services, while many are reluctant to participate in any way, particularly in states with the most extreme "work first" philosophies. We predict, then, that the variety of activities community colleges undertake will expand, and we will find — indeed we can already see — community colleges that are mainstays of local reforms alongside those with no provisions for welfare and other low-income individuals. This variation might not be bad — it might, for example, simply reflect the proclivity of colleges to serve the different priorities of their local communities. But where it emerges from a lack of state assistance or vision, or from state policies that actively thwart the efforts of local colleges, or from state initiatives (like those for remediation or economic

development) that lead colleges in different directions, then the variation is the result of state policy rather than local accommodation.

Finally, the shift to local initiative runs contrary to the developments in job training, and ignores certain lessons from that history. Short-term job training in this country began as local efforts in the manpower programs of the 1960s, later consolidated in Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 and the Job Training Partnership Act of 1981, and now revised in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Over this period, there has been a slow shift toward greater state initiative, reflected particularly in the state role in monitoring performance and eliminating the wide variation in quality that has characterized prior local efforts. The lesson from this experience, it seems to us, is that some balance of state activity and local initiative is preferable, and that states have legitimate roles to play in monitoring, in creating visions of good practice, and in providing technical assistance. But with the exception of a few active states (e.g., Oregon, Washington, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and North Carolina), most states appear to have abandoned any role in the provision of education and training to welfare recipients through community colleges, and the likely effects will be a greater variation in quality than is desirable.

III. Emerging Models of Practice

As community colleges contemplate their options for participating in welfare reform, it has become clear that their previous efforts can no longer be sustained. Of course, welfare recipients can always enroll as regular students, though they are now being discouraged from doing so by pressures to move into employment and by limits on "vocational educational training"; most colleges feel that they have lost substantial fractions of their welfare enrollees.[9] In addition, many colleges have in the past developed programs specifically for welfare recipients, some of them —

like the learning communities at LaGuardia Community Colleges — remarkably sophisticated. But most of these have suffered reduced enrollments and even closure since the limits on education and training preclude lengthy and intensive education. Instead, community colleges seem to be developing in at least five distinctive ways, some of which have real potential and some of which are likely to be ineffective for welfare recipients.

Replicating short-term job training: Many colleges have moved away from the longer "education" programs for welfare recipients — certificate and Associate programs — to create short-term, non-credit, job-specific programs lasting 4 to 12 weeks. Some of these provide little more than job search assistance; others provide intensive jobs skills training, or remediation via computer-based programs, or "soft skills" training (discussed in Section IV). Often these are created in response to local requests for proposals (RFPs) of local Workforce Development Boards; community colleges are often responding to opportunities created by other agencies, without (as far as we can see) shaping the content of these programs. These programs suffer from many of the disadvantages of job training: They are quite short, even though their students usually have serious gaps in both academic and occupational skills. They are typically non-credit, so they cannot lead welfare recipients into longer certificate and Associate programs. They usually rely on part-time faculty hired without any special training in instruction, so that they display the inattention to pedagogy typical of job training and adult education. While some claim to target jobs with relatively high wages or with growth potential, most of the jobs for which they train are entry-level, minimum wage jobs. We would love to be proved wrong, but the descriptions from state agencies, as well as our limited observations of local programs, suggest that all the liabilities of short-term job training programs are being replicated in these efforts.

The problem, of course, is that short-term job training has repeatedly been shown to be ineffective. A series of evaluations, including sophisticated random-assignment experiments, have shown that short-term job training and welfare-to-work programs increase earnings by trivial amounts (in the range of $200 to $500 per year under most conditions) and fail to move individuals out of poverty or off of welfare.[10] Furthermore, even these paltry benefits tend to vanish after four or five years, so that the long-run effects are non-existent. Only one program in the arena of job training has ever been shown to have long-run effects, and that one — the Center for Employment Training in San Jose — is a longer, more intensive program with many more services than those now being contemplated for welfare recipients.[11] When community colleges recreate short term programs in the image of job training, they are taking a path that can only be ineffective in the long run. This path *could* be a beginning step toward creating more extensive and effective programs over the longer run, though we see little sign of this.

Furthermore, some of the plans for short-term programs are simply ludicrous. In New Jersey, for example, a conference on "Gearing Up for WorkFirst New Jersey" re-defined workplace literacy as "the ability to integrate the 'three R's' (beyond the third grade level) with work-based tasks", a level of reading that will never facilitate self-sufficiency. Also in New Jersey, a community college program cited by a community college advocate as exemplary teaches computer repair where trainees supposedly do not need high reading levels, allowing the program to eliminate remediation — again a prescription for long-run failure. In Maryland, the only higher education initiative for welfare clients is one to encourage college students to volunteer to tutor in reading, math, and job search skills — an activity that must be unpaid, and for which there is no current mechanism to link college students with welfare recipients. A highly-touted program supported by WtW grants matches ten PICs with local community colleges to train welfare recipients in

five occupations — building maintenance, customer service, home care worker, office worker, or security guard — with low wages and few prospects for advancement without further education; the colleges will provide occupational, academic, and employability skills via distance learning — a method that has long been known to require the most motivated and independent students — to a group known to have both motivational and learning difficulties. A problem with such dreadful examples, as with short-term training generally, is that their inevitable ineffectiveness damages the very idea of investment in human capital, not to mention the long-run prospects of the individuals enrolled.

Creating flexible delivery options: A more promising strategy among some colleges has been to convert existing programs into more flexible variants. This has been done, for example, by developing alternative entry dates (or open entry/open exit options) so that welfare recipients do not have to adhere to a conventional academic calendar, and by scheduling classes at unconventional times. Sometimes colleges make courses more intensive than usual — for example, meeting 20 - 30 hours per week rather than the conventional 3, allowing a semester's worth of coursework (e.g., 48 hours) to be packed into two or three weeks. Washington state put $4.2 million into redesigning programs to be more flexible, creating modules and evening or weekend classes while still emphasizing the integration of occupational skills and basic education. Many colleges are redesigning courses into shortened modules of "building blocks" that allow individuals to complete modules quickly and sequentially; many have created a Passport that shows the completion of modules, courses, and programs; and the Bridge programs awarding certificates can allow recipients to transition into degree programs later, as the conditions of their lives permit. And some colleges (like all those in Florida) have created early exit points that so students can complete coherent units of coursework rather than an entire certificate taking a year, which is too long under most state welfare

regulations. These options therefore respond to the restrictions of the new welfare law and to the life circumstances of welfare recipients, though they try to maintain the same faculty, teaching, and content as conventional programs.

It's of course too early to know how effective these approaches will be. Though intensive courses could plausibly be *more* effective for some people, it may be that intensive three-week programs are simply not as effective as the same content extended over a longer period of time — the complaint in four-year colleges against trimesters in place of semesters. "It's too soon to know" what the result will be, and unfortunately the experiment to test alternative delivery modes is being conducted on the poorest women and their children. But at least this approach to creating new welfare-to-work programs avoids the well-known liabilities of short-term job training.

Creating broader programs: A number of community colleges have responded to the challenge of welfare reform not by creating programs specifically for welfare recipients — since such programs are necessarily constrained by too many welfare regulations and concentrate individuals with the greatest barriers to learning and employment — but by creating programs for a range of welfare recipients and the working poor. In contrast to the colleges that have responded opportunistically to local funding, these entrepreneurial colleges have come up with more creative responses to the challenges of welfare reform than simply replicating programs known to be ineffective.

The characteristics of these programs vary, of course, though in general they incorporate several elements of the exemplary programs we outline in the concluding section. For example, one college in Washington, following the wage and skill progression model, has developed a 10-week manufacturing technician program with both classroom training and on-the-job experiences, where the last three weeks is completed on the job with a mentoring component directed by on-

line supervisors; the program includes technical skills as well as a 20-hour curriculum emphasizing the rights and responsibilities of workers. A Colorado community college has designed a series of certificate programs — in occupations including financial services, early childhood education, retailing, manufacturing, and surgical technician training — which last 4 to 7 months; individuals attend the college for 22 hours each week (for remediation, "soft skills" and work readiness, and vocational classes) and are employed 18 hours, and various support services (job coaching, a mental health group, child care information) are also included. These are all more intensive than conventional short-term job training, though they can all be completed within the limits of welfare legislation, and they incorporate a variety of school and work activities as well as support services.

Developing multi-faceted customized programs: Some high-profile programs train welfare recipients for a well-known large corporation (or perhaps a small consortium) — for example, Pacific Gas and Electric in the San Francisco area, Sprint in Kansas City, Disney World in central Florida, the Marriott Corporation in several locations. These are the programs that state officials typically cite when asked about exemplary efforts. Typically, the corporation provides work experience placements; a local community college provides remedial/developmental education and job skills training; and sometimes a community-based organization provides mentors, or "soft skills" or employability skills training, or other support services. These programs are relatively intensive, lasting perhaps 20 to 30 weeks, and they contain a number of related elements — academic (or remedial) preparation as well as occupational training, work experience as well as classroom instruction, support services as well as training. Usually the corporation involved hires many (but not all) of the completers of such programs, so there are clear incentives to do well.

These programs are carefully planned and thoughtfully structured to avoid some of the most obvious pitfalls of other short-term efforts. Of course, it's too soon

to tell what their long-run effectiveness might be, and it's possible that the emphasis on relatively low-level jobs will not provide welfare recipients with the skills necessary for long-run employment. But for the moment the most serious drawback is that there aren't many of these programs: they can provide visions of good practice, but they provide relatively few opportunities, they involve relatively few firms,[12] and at the current scale they cannot address the employment problems of the several million heads of household remaining on welfare.

Case Management: In several states, there has been an emphasis on case management as a way of guiding welfare recipients through education and training alternatives. For example, Illinois has created the Advancing Opportunities program emphasizing case management and helping recipients build on their existing skill levels, and these have been incorporated into community colleges. Local colleges in Connecticut are reviving Job Connections, a program with both school-based and work-based components incorporates case management on the college campus. Massachusetts, which generally has little role for community colleges, has implemented a pilot project built on a case management model involving five community colleges, identifying for welfare recipients the variety of services available. In Washington, case management is being located at several community colleges; this is partly an effort to incorporate a view more favorable to education, recognizing that other agencies providing case management (employment services, for example) may be hostile to education. While the idea of case management is not particularly familiar within community colleges,[13] the efforts to wrestle with the special issues raised by welfare recipients have brought the idea into more of them.

Opting Out: In other states and localities, community colleges are simply opting out of the provision of programs for welfare recipients. This is particularly the case in states (like Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Maryland) that have

essentially no role for education and training in their "work first" policies. Colleges that have opted out tend to cite the restrictions of "work first" as reasons for their doing so. For example, one state director of welfare commented that "imaginative" community colleges had reorganized their schedules to meet the new reality of welfare but that others "are whining that 'work first' is anti-education." In some cases other incentives play a role. For example, in Michigan the state funding mechanism does not increase funds automatically when additional students enroll, and there have been state pressures for colleges to play stronger roles in economic development programs providing training to incumbent workers. Colleges are therefore turning away from services for welfare recipients — a high-cost, high-risk venture that might not cover its costs — toward higher status economic development. It's hard to blame them, even though the innovative actions of more entrepreneurial colleges would serve both welfare recipients and the breadth of college missions better in the longer run.

As early as it is in the trajectory of welfare reform, there are already some exemplars that could provide guidance for other community colleges and training providers. These include, for example, the customized programs with high-profile corporate support, which typically incorporate a variety of education (academic or remedial, occupational, and "soft skills"), work experience, and support services; the wage and skill progression model in Washington, with its clear sense of moving up a ladder of opportunities, and the similar vision in Wisconsin's Step Up; the programs created for a variety of low-income and welfare individuals, also with a variety of college-based and work-based activities; the technical assistance that New York is providing to its colleges; the flexible scheduling that some college are adopting. One question, however, is whether these innovations can spread beyond their current borders. Some of them require state policy or assistance, and are unlikely to develop in the most emphatic "work first" states. Others depend on

additional state funding for increased enrollment, and on corporate participation. And the diffusion of innovation requires information and technical assistance, something that is now being provided by various private organizations like NETWORK, an affiliate of the American Association of Community College,[14] but not by any state or federal agencies that we know of (except New York). So the conditions for these exemplars to spread are not particularly good.

No doubt other kinds of programs will emerge as colleges develop their efforts. However, the larger pattern established so far is likely to persist: we forecast that there will be increasing differences among community colleges in what they provide for welfare recipients. Some will be participants in high-profile customized programs, and others will develop their own innovative efforts for both welfare recipients and the working poor. Others will recreate the short-term job training programs that have already been shown not to work, and many will do nothing — limited in part by state policies. Again, such variation is familiar, since community colleges are already enormously varied institutions, oriented to the very different conditions of their local communities. But it reflects yet another way that welfare recipients will face vast differences in the education and training they can acquire.

IV. Emerging Problems: The Long-run Prospects for Welfare Recipients

In seeing the policies that states have created, and observing some of the local developments, a number of long-run problems become obvious. In the short run, the booming economy has reduced welfare rolls substantially, states have been able to meet their 1997 and 1998 targets for reducing their welfare rolls, and various sources of funding have created a virtual glut of resources for various programs. But these conditions can't possibly last, and it's time — while there is some slack in the

welfare system — to see where the future problems might arise, to see what might be done about them.

Welfare Reduction versus Self-sufficiency: The booming economy has made it possible for many welfare recipients to find employment; but most state officials agree that this has been in entry-level, minimum wage work with little prospects for earnings growth. As one state official noted, "I think that what we'll see is that this state, whose main focus has been to get people off welfare and placed 20 to 30 hours a week in minimum-wage jobs, will have a big problem on their hands when those people begin falling off." These are the jobs most susceptible to economic downturns, or to automation; because the quality of such jobs is often poor, individuals are more likely to leave them than middle-skilled, middle-earnings jobs.[15] In theory, these problems could be resolved by providing post-employment training and services, to increase skills levels so that welfare recipients can continue moving up a ladder of employment opportunities. There are a few states with *plans* for post-employment training: Washington, with its wage and skills progression; Wisconsin, with its vision of the Step Up program; and New York, where Project Bridge will in theory allow individuals to come back for post-employment training. But post-employment services are not yet being widely provided, and the plans for doing so are extremely vague; in many states even the idea is unfamiliar to state officials. We worry, then, that the facile support for post-employment training and services among those who advocate "work first" will in practice prove to be empty. The long-run prospects for former welfare recipients continue to be poor, and when this country next hits a recession many of them will be unemployed and poor again.

The pressure, under the PRWORA, has been to move welfare recipients off of welfare rolls — that is, off of TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families). But this not the same as self-sufficiency, since those who have left TANF continue to get transitional child care and Medicaid. Furthermore, low-income individuals are

eligible for food stamps, public housing, other forms of child care and social services, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Earned Income Tax Credit, and many other public subsidies regardless of being on TANF or not. Real self-sufficiency requires more than the minimum-wage jobs that many welfare recipients have been able to find — it requires, in essence, the kinds of middle-skilled, middle-wage jobs that only those with a high school diploma or some postsecondary education can find. The sleight of hand in the current situation, then, is that the welfare rolls have declined substantially but self-sufficiency may not have — and enhancing self-sufficiency requires either the substantial investments in education that "work first" disallows, or the most carefully-designed of the emerging programs outlined in the previous section.

Selection Effects and the Predictable Failures of Training: With the booming economy and pressures from the PRWORA, state officials agree, the most job-ready welfare recipients have left the welfare rolls. These include the large number of recipients who have always been on welfare for short periods of time, to weather a temporary emergency, and who have the skills and work records to find their way back to stable employment. After two years of this, the individuals left on welfare are a decidedly non-random group. They are likely to be the individuals who are "permanent" recipients, with less formal schooling, little or no work experience, and multiple barriers to employment including young children, health and mental health problems, family violence, substance abuse. They are also more likely to be black or Latino rather than white, exacerbating the racial stereotypes of welfare and complicating job placement in labor markets where discrimination persists.[16]

The problem is that *no training program has ever been shown to be effective with this population*. For example, the Minority Female Single Parent Demonstration project was designed for a group — minority women with children and without husbands — with special barriers to finding stable employment and

likely to be on welfare for long periods of time. The program emphasized remediation as well as a variety of supportive services; it lasted an average of six months — much longer than any "work first" program now allows. But three of the four programs had no effects on earnings and welfare receipt whatsoever.[17] The fourth was the Center for Employment Training, which clearly is an effective program — but which is both *sui generis* and outside the limits of what "work first" provides. Similarly, New Chance, a pilot program for poor young mothers (largely high school dropouts), assumed that these individuals required a range of supportive services in addition to remedial education and job training. Despite relatively intensive services, an innovative mentoring program, and a cost of about $9,000 per person, the effects were close to zero. The qualitative interviews by Janet Quint and her colleagues reveal why: high levels of abuse and depressive (or bi-polar) conditions, beyond the influence of the services available, made it impossible for the program to work as intended.[18]

We conclude, then, that even intensive and experimental job training programs are ineffective for the welfare population that is, in most states, left on the welfare rolls. Because of this fact, the failure of *limited* training efforts within the welfare system is virtually inevitable. Under these conditions, community colleges would be well advised to avoid recreating the conditions of ineffective job training, as those setting up short-term programs are doing, and to consider carefully the match between the services they provide and the real needs of welfare recipients.

Remedial education and "soft skills" training: Many programs now being developed emphasize remedial (or developmental) education, on the assumption that welfare recipients lack the basic language and math competencies necessary for employment or further education. And most of them also include some training in "soft skills", an ill-defined set of competencies associated with job-keeping as well as job-finding and usually including motivation, punctuality, persistence, initiative,

relations with co-workers, and other interpersonal and intra-personal abilities. Indeed, many short-term programs contain little more than some job search assistance, a course in "soft skills", and a few weeks of remediation via a computer program. The problem is that the pedagogy of effective remediation and "soft skills" training has been totally ignored, and we fear that the efforts now being developed are wholly inadequate.

Remedial or developmental education has, of course, been an important component of community colleges for a long time. While there are many dreary drill-oriented programs, a few colleges have developed more innovative approaches including more student-centered and constructivist pedagogies, careful selection and training of instructors, and "learning communities" that link developmental courses with substantive courses in either academic or occupational areas.[19] Unfortunately, there are no indications that welfare-to-work programs are approaching remediation with this kind of care. State officials report that most programs are using computer programs, particularly PLATO; as anyone who has seen them in action knows, most computer-based remedial programs are the worst kind of drill, perhaps useful as review for those with rusty skills, but likely to be completely ineffective for those who have never mastered reading or simple math. The instructors in most welfare-to-work programs are apparently newly-hired part-time instructors, lacking any training in developmental education and without the experience that has allowed some instructors to develop innovative approaches. And dismal as this picture of welfare-to-work efforts is, the record of job training programs in this area is even worse: the difficulty of providing effective remedial education is barely even mentioned, let alone addressed.[20] Unless there is a more careful effort to examine the requirements of effective remedial education for welfare recipients, these efforts will fail.

The situation with "soft skills" is, if anything, even worse. It's hard to know how to teach them: they are basic aspects of behavior and personality, rather than "skills" in the conventional sense of specific procedures that can be quickly learned. Teaching individuals to be punctual and hardworking in poorly-paid jobs with little prospect for mobility is especially difficult. No doubt there are good ways to teach these "skills": many occupational instructors model the conditions of real work in their workshops; some community colleges use work experience and co-operative education to examine the requirements of successful employment; role playing and carefully-guided reflection about work experiences might be other approaches. But such methods, usually quite extensive and resting on a deep understanding of both work requirements and pedagogical alternatives, are unlikely to be replicated in the short modules with untrained instructors incorporated into welfare-related programs. Many programs are trying to reshape deeply-rooted behavior with extremely short programs: Georgia provides an 80-hour program, Iowa's Breaking Barriers lasts 20 hours over a week, and others mention three or four-week courses. One state official noted that methods are "all over the map", though a few canned programs have found favor in some states. The dominant approach seems to be discussion — where the goal for each participant is to "gain insight about their life through self-talk", as one official described it — or reading with discussion, a limited approach to changing deeply-rooted behavior. In some cases we've observed, the "discussion" becomes teacher-dominated and didactic, a constant danger with untrained instructors. In one ghastly class we observed, the instructor came late and tolerated inconsistent attendance and tardiness; her plans for small-group discussions, role playing, and visitors from the employment world were all undone by poor planning; and the class in practice was reduced to students working individually on worksheets and quizzes, with occasional instructor references to the need for good attitudes on the job. In general, such instructors are untrained, they

come from the world of teaching and have little familiarity with employment, they are provided little assistance with curriculum materials, and there are no new experiences — for example, occupational workshops or work placements — to use as the basis for learning. There are exceptions, no doubt, including the customized programs described in the previous section, which do provide work experience as well as classroom discussion of employment requirements. But on the whole we fear that welfare-to-work programs have hurled themselves into "soft skills" training without much preparation or thought about how to teach such complex competencies.

From what we've been able to see so far, then, the long-run prospects for welfare recipients are quite poor. The current employment conditions have enabled many welfare recipients to find employment, and have provided "work first" a semblance of success. But when the economy goes bad — as it inevitably will — then individuals who have the skills only for low-skilled work will be unemployed once again. Post-employment training has not yet materialized; short job training programs are not effective over the long run, particularly for individuals with multiple barriers to employment; the remedial education and soft skills training now being provided are likely to be ineffective; and the number of innovative efforts is small. None of these conclusions is inevitable, of course, but reversing them will require considerably more attention to the quality of welfare-to-work programs.

V. Directions for the Future

Some consequences of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act have been widely praised, even by educators who disagree with the "work first" philosophy. The conversion of welfare administrators from

eligibility workers to caseworkers concerned with promoting employment is one example. The firm insistence that individuals be self-sufficient or moving toward self-sufficiency — even (or especially) those who are parents — is certainly another. The experimentation with education and training alternatives unleashed in some states is another clear benefit, and should provide us over time with new and more flexible alternatives to the education and training programs we now have.

But experimentation isn't valuable in its own right; it's only useful if it produces more effective programs. There's already been plenty of experimentation since the 1960s, in job training programs, in welfare-to-work programs, in various pilot and demonstration programs, and in community colleges themselves. From these we can derive some conclusions that have been reinforced by the more recent experiences under the PRWORA. For those planning welfare-to-work programs, including those in community colleges, these conclusion are worth restating because they keep getting lost. In fact, the state officials we interviewed were generally unable to tell us about exemplary local programs.[21] Aside from the fact that they are unable to visit many local programs, they simply lack any way of thinking about the characteristics of effective programs. The emphasis so far has been on quantity — on the numbers of welfare recipients moved off welfare, on the numbers enrolled in quick-fix programs — over quality.

No doubt there are many ways to summarize the lessons from the history of experimentation, but our version includes five precepts:[22]

1. Effective programs understand the local labor market, and target those jobs with relatively high earnings, strong employment growth, and opportunities for individual advancement. Programs in high employment areas can get away with ignoring this recommendation, of course, but only at the expense of long-run effectiveness. This recommendation underlies the efforts of some states to restrict education and training to high-growth occupations. The customized programs

described in Section III achieve the same result by tying training to employment in large, stable firms — albeit, in some cases, in relatively low-level jobs. But those programs that fail to consider the quality of jobs for which they provide training , or that target poorly-paid jobs with few prospects for advancement, are likely to replicate the patterns of much current employment of former welfare recipients in minimum-wage positions with few prospects for advancement, with dismal prospects for the long run.

2. Effective programs contain an appropriate mix of academic (or remedial, or basic) education, occupational skills, and work-based learning, in the best cases integrated with one another. These three components are complementary to one another since different components develop the range of competencies required in employment, including those necessary for long-run self-sufficiency and the "soft skills" necessary for job-keeping. The incorporation of all three was the foundation of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994; all three are present in the customized programs for high-profile corporations mentioned in Section III, in the widely-cited Center for Employment Training, and in many exemplary community college programs. Similarly, many of the programs incorporating basic skills profiled by the National Institute of Literacy provide other kinds of training and work experience in addition to basic skills (Murphy and Johnson, 1998).

Furthermore, while flexible and innovative scheduling may be necessary, the intensity of both academic and vocational education must be appropriate to the jobs being targeted. Short-term job training lasting 12 weeks on the average has been ineffective, and the very short 3 to 4-week programs now being offered cannot possibly be improvements.

Finally, effective programs pay attention to the pedagogy of everything they teach, whether classroom-based or work-based. Poorly-taught basic skills, or occupational education, or "soft skills", cannot possibly help welfare recipients

master the competencies they need for long-run independence. Unprepared instructors are inadequate to the teaching challenges in such programs, and the lack of attention to teacher training is a tip-off that the quality of instruction is likely to be poor.

3. Effective programs provide their clients or students with pathways or "ladders" of further education opportunities, so they can continue their education and training when they are able to. The creation of such ladders is the purpose of caseworkers in some states, and the caseworker model of post-employment services often stresses creating ladders with incremental advances, often with additional training.[23] Wisconsin's notion of "stepping out and stepping back in" is similar, as is Illinois' Advancing Opportunities program. Washington is planning a series of Bridge programs to create ladders or "bridges" into education, with case management to smooth the process. The widely-praised Center for Employment Training has articulated its efforts with local community colleges, so that CET training can be applied toward Associate degrees.[24] But when short training programs are independent of further education, or when community colleges offer non-credit courses without facilitating transfer into regular credit-bearing courses, then the possibilities of such ladders are destroyed.

4. Effective programs provide a variety of supportive services, as appropriate given the needs of their clients or students. This precept has been incorporated in many programs providing such services as child care, counseling, and placement services, and case management may be systematic ways of providing or finding a variety of services. Of course, there may be limits to the services a program can provide, as the New Chance evaluations illustrate, but a program that fails to consider the need for supportive services may have low completion rates.

5. Effective programs collect appropriate information about their results and use these to improve their quality. This precept has been embedded in job training

programs, with performance measures required as a way to monitor and enhance effectiveness; performance measures are now required in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the recent amendments to the Carl Perkins legislation for vocational education.

These precepts are useful in various ways. Most obviously, they should be considered by those developing programs at the local level. Many of the ineffective programs in job training and adult education violate one more of these ideals, and we fear that many of the current welfare-to-work programs also violate them. If state or local regulations prohibit community colleges from adhering to these precepts, then perhaps opting out is the only honorable recourse. Of course, we can also see that some entrepreneurial colleges have developed their own innovative approaches, following most of these precepts, and this is a more effective way of participating in welfare reform than opting out. But the path of those colleges that have simply recreated short-term job training programs is almost surely not helpful to welfare recipients themselves — unless this step is a transition to developing more intensive programs.

Second, we hope that state policy-makers will recognize the value of these precepts. Several states have articulated policies remarkably consistent with some of them: Washington with its wage and skill progression; Wisconsin with Step Up and its affirmation of both education and employment, Iowa with its Family Independence Program, and Oregon with its provision for longer periods of education and training. But in other states committed to the most barren version of "work first", we fear that the lack of appropriate education and training will doom some proportion of welfare recipients (and the working poor as well) to cycling on and off welfare, contrary to the image of self-sufficiency under welfare reform.

Finally, we hope that these precepts, and more sustained attention to the requirements of effective programs in general, can raise the level of discussion.

Replacing a naive version of human capital with a naive version of "work first" cannot possibly be successful over the longer run, but this kind of either-or approach isn't the right question either. The issue instead is whether states and localities can develop more sophisticated approaches that integrate education and employr. :nt, for various groups seeking employment including welfare recipients and the working poor, in which the quality of education, training, and employment are more carefully considered.

Footnotes

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[1] These officials were in California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. These included the ten states we had previously studied, along with some others reported by other national experts to be developing innovative approaches to welfare. If there's any bias to this sample, it probably over-represents active and innovating states.

[2] In our reading of the legislation, there is room to describe different education and training components of a program in various ways so that two-year programs (for example) incorporating various kinds of basic skills and job training could be provided without violating the 12-month limitation on "vocational education training". However, no state or local official has yet mentioned this possibility.

[3] See Katz and Carnevale (1998).

[4] Robert Pear, "States Declining to Draw Billions in Welfare Money", *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1999.

[5] See Step Up (1998).This vision of ladders of short-term education and training opportunities is remarkably close to the one I articulated in Grubb (1996a), Ch. 6.

[6] See *Step Up*, p. 6.

[7] We caution that "mixing together" various services is not the same as integrating them. Often programs provide academic or remedial skills at one time, occupational skills at another, work experience in some independent way, and support services through still other agencies, eliminating the possibilities for each component to reinforce the other through real integration.

[8] See Macwan and Bender (1998). On the dominant policy of "state guidance, local direction", see Grubb et al., 1999, Section III.

[9] Almost none of them have the data to prove it, however, since there is not generally a simple way for them to learn which of their students are on welfare. No state that we have examined has yet instituted a matching procedure between welfare departments and community colleges.

[10] There's a virtual industry summarizing the effects of training; see Grubb, 1996a; LaLonde, 1995; U.S. D.O.L., 1995; Fischer and Cordray, 1996; O'Neill and O'Neill, 1997; Strawn, 1998.

[11] On the long-term effects, see Friedlander and Burtless, 1995; Fischer and Cordray, 1996; and Zambrowski and Gordon, 1993 , for CET.

[12] See the Associated Press story, based on interviews of the 100 largest employers, that found only 34 have welfare-to-work programs, with 13 planning them. "U.S. Firms Slow to Hire Off Welfare", San Francisco *Chronicle*, May 26, 1998, p. A3.

[13] Counselors do not usually provide the same continuity that case managers do, though in California the Puente project integrates counselors and instructors in a learning community that has some of the same characteristics.

[14] NETWORK provides information to community colleges about job training, including welfare-related efforts; their Web site is www.network.org. A useful site for a variety of welfare-related information is www.welfare.info.org, supported by the Welfare Information Network.

[15] See also Burtless (1998), reviewing the conditions of jobs for less-qualified workers and the experiences of welfare recipients in Milwaukee. See also Burtless (1997): "The job prospects of most welfare recipients are poor."

[16] See Jason DeParle, "Shrinking Welfare Rolls Leave Record High Share of Minorities", *New York Times*, July 27, 1998, p. 1.

[17] On the MFSP program results, see Gordon and Burghardt (1990); Rangaranjan, Burghardt, and Gordon (1992).

[18] On New Chance, see Quint, Polit, Bos, and Cave (1994), and Quint, Musick, and Ladner (1994).

[19] See especially Ch. 6 of Grubb and Associates (1999), and Ch. 5 on remedial/developmental teaching..

[20] As just one example, a remedial program in San Diego that was apparently carefully devised proved to have no effects whatsoever; see Martinson and Friedlander (1994).

[21] See also Grubb et al. (1999). When state and local officials do mention specific programs, they are usually linked to high-profile employers, and the officials rarely have any direct knowledge of what elements might make them particularly effective.

[22] We have developed these five from a series of examinations of various education and training programs; see especially Grubb et al. (1999), Grubb and Ryan (1999), and King, Lawson, and Olson (1995).

[23] Many of the post-employment services profiled in Haimson and Hershey (1998) follow this caseworker approach.

[24] See Strawn (1998), p. 22.

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